Assistance for tobacco exports

2580. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

the specific assistance being given by the Tobacco Board to encourage tobacco exports from Andhra Pradesh;

the number of farmers who will benefit from such exports;

the specific financial assistance being give., to Andhra farmers to grow better quality Virginia tobacco;

whether such assistance will be increased in the coming fiscal year; and

the steps proposed in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) The Tobacco Board provides assistance to the tobacco farmers through various extension and developmental schemes for improving the quality and productivity of tobacco grown in the State of Andhra Pradesh in tune with the changing international demands to promote exports. The schemes include, Farm Mechanization, Improving Yield & Quality of FCV tobacco, Improving curing practices, model project areas, integrated pest-management & quality circles etc. The Tobacco Board undertakes extensive advertisement campaign in the international media to promote Indian tobacco.

All tobacco farmers are extended assistance under these schemes to derive benefit from exports.

to (e) An allocation of Rs. 85.20 lakhs has been made for the year 2006-07 for these schemes. The Tobacco Board had also organized Input loans of about Rs. 30.00 crores to the farmers at 6%-6.5% rate of interest per annum from scheduled banks for 2005-06 crop season. The assistance under these schemes is extended as per need from time to time.

Discussions on crop specific issues

2581. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have invited the farmers to discuss various crop-specific issues pertaining to WTO and Andhra Pradesh;